

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

Office of the Governor



March 19, 2014

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE MISSISSIPPI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE MISSISSIPPI STATE SENATE:

GOVERNOR'S SIGNING STATEMENT FOR HOUSE BILL 542

I am signing House Bill 542, "AN ACT TO REQUIRE THE STATE AND SCHOOL EMPLOYEES HEALTH INSURANCE MANAGEMENT BOARD TO REVIEW AND STUDY WHETHER TO EXPAND COVERAGE CURRENTLY PROVIDED FOR THE TREATMENT OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS UNDER THE STATE AND SCHOOL EMPLOYEES HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN; TO REQUIRE A REPORT TO BE FILED WITH THE LEGISLATURE WITH RECOMMENDATIONS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES."

As introduced, the purpose of this bill was to expand families' options for the screening, diagnosis, and treatment of autism spectrum disorders (ASD), a laudable goal given that early diagnosis and individually tailored intervention are essential to the effective treatment of ASD. As passed, however, the bill only directs the State and School Employees Health Insurance Management Board to "review and study whether to expand coverage currently provided for the treatment of autism spectrum disorders under the State and School Employees Health Insurance Plan." This directive was unnecessary because the Board was already in the process of studying just such an expansion of its current coverage.

While the bill fails to achieve its original purpose or any tangible progress on this issue, I am nonetheless signing it into law because it does no harm. The Board can share the results of its ongoing study with the Legislature (as it would have done upon request, without need of new legislation). I am hopeful that this will lead to improved and expanded options for screening, diagnosing, and treating ASD.

Respectfully submitted,

Phil Bryant
Governor